Solon. Mass
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Middlebury Mar 29th — 49

Copied

Dear Brother:

You may think it strange that I have not before answered your letter. But if any apology is needed, it is this: thought your letter was dated the 10th of this month, it did not reach me till the 24th. This explanation I trust will satisfactorily account for my delay. I am glad to learn that you are at Chester, and again engaged in your studies. I hope that you will find your new situation a good one, and also that you may think it to be for your interest to remain there during the ~~remainder~~ subsequent part of your preparatory course. It is not a good policy for a student to make frequent changes, as to the places of his attendance at school. Such a course has a tendency to unstring the mind, to break up the connection of its thoughts, and unfit it for a healthy exercise of its powers. I can now look back upon the time which I spent in preparing for college, and see the results that have followed from the habits of study and intercourse which I adopted, much more clearly than I could then anticipate them. I would not be understood, when I say this, as flattering myself with the idea, that I pursued the safest and best course. By no means: Though I have reason to be glad that I chose to act the part of the close and laborious student, I am nevertheless convinced that my habits of intercourse with other students, were not such as would have been

most conducive to my own happiness and their good will. True, I was not accustomed to mingle in the noisy brawls and senseless frolics in which too many are tempted to engage: but my failing was rather in the other extreme. I was too fond of retirement; too much inclined to seclude myself from all society, thereby depriving myself of the advantages which might be derived from a proper intercourse with others, and failing to discharge the offices of friendship and respect, that were justly due to them. Man is a social being; and it is not his province to deny himself the enjoyment of social gratifications; though it should be limited to such associations as have a tendency to improve and elevate the mind. Let me then remind you of the importance of adopting proper rules by which to regulate your habits of study and intercourse. In many respects you may consider the present as the most critical period of your life. Your are now laying the foundation upon which you must of necessity build in the future. The views and the motives which are allowed to govern your conduct now, are not destined to exert a transient influence. In a greater or less degree they will give direction to your future character. It is a remark often made by those whose experience entitles them to much credit, that the history of a man's academical and collegiate course is essentially the history of his whole life. Since then you are now laying the foundation of the character which you are to sustain through life, you will readily perceive the importance of establishing yourself upon principles of virtue and truth. Do not swerve from

these principles, but adhere to them with puritanical firmness. As a thorough intellectual discipline is requisite to qualify you for extensive usefulness, therefore be diligent and faithful in the prosecution of your studies; study not to elicit the ~~~~ applause of your teachers, or the idle flatteries of your companions; but for the essential benefit which you may thereby derive, and for ~~increasing~~ enlarging the sphere of your usefulness in the world. Be exceedingly cautious in the associations which you form; for here is the greatest danger. Give your confidence to none but the virtuous and the good. Mingle not in the society of those who seek for pleasure in wanton amusement, and stifle the growth of virtue in their minds by vicious indulgences; but fortify yourself against the temptations of evil companions. Nevertheless be kind and affable to all, even to those who least deserve your favor, and at all times manifest a willingness to oblige them in any consistent way. Be not ostentatious in the display of the talents which you may possess; let them be called forth by circumstances and occasions, rather than by voluntary efforts to intrude yourself into public notice. Remember that true genius is clothed in a humble garb, is modest and retiring in its nature, and unobtrusive even in its most powerful acts; whereas false genius is ever seeking for an opportunity to display itself, and is charmed by the noisy applause of men. Finally let me admonish you to spare no pains in seeking for religious improvement, and cultivating right affections of the heart. While you are laboring for the attainment of earthly wisdom, do not

forget that the wisdom which cometh from above is infinitely greater in value.

As regards my own affairs here at college, I have said nothing, and have but little to say; nothing of interest having occurred since my return. I am plodding along in my old way, progressing slowly in my studies, yet surely, as I trust. We are reading the Memorabilia, the Satires of Horace, Milton, and Shakspeare. Trigonometry Mensuration and Isoperimetry constitute our mathematics for this term.

I received a letter from father on wednesday of this week, It appears that the folks at home had become somewhat alarmed about me, because I had not written to them. During the first part of the term my time was so constantly occupied in study and writing for college exercises that I neglected to write home, till the ~~end of~~ fourth week after my arrival. My letter probably reached Langdon soon after the date of that which father sent me. Therefore I have not written again, supposing that will afford a sufficient explanation.

Junior exhibition comes off in 3 weeks from next tuesday eve. after which there will be a vacation of one week. How I shall spend my time during vacation I have not yet decided; but think it quite probable that I shall remain in Middlebury.

I have received no letter from Summer since I left Langdon.

Your affectionate brother

Solon.